



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, DC

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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATES

FROM: HQ USAF/JA
1420 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1420


SUBJECT: Support for Professional Military Associations

Commanders and staff judge advocates must walk a fine line when issues involving professional military associations are presented.

On the one hand, professional military organizations provide invaluable service to the Air Force through support for our mission and activities, education and mentoring programs for our personnel, and on-going public relations efforts within the civilian community. On the other hand, standards of conduct rules prevent Air Force officials from officially endorsing or promoting these organizations. Even though limited logistical support is authorized in many cases, some commanders and staff judge advocates are reluctant to use official resources to support private organizations under any circumstances.

In an effort to educate commanders on what is permissible under the Joint Ethics Regulation (JER), the Chief of Staff is sending out a fact sheet entitled "Support for Professional Military Associations." The same fact sheet, with citations added, is attached to this memo. While staff judge advocates must always honor the letter and the spirit of JER limitations, you must also ensure that commanders understand the range of permissible options when support is requested. I encourage you to emphasize the positive aspects of support -- what *can* be provided -- as well as the limitations, to maximize the commander's discretion.

Professional military associations have co-existed with the Armed Forces since the beginning of our country and they will continue to play an important role in our future. I am confident that coordination between commanders and staff judge advocates will result in support for professional military associations to the extent that the law and resources permit.


WILLIAM A. MOORMAN
Major General, USAF
The Judge Advocate General

Attachment:
Fact Sheet - Support for Professional Military
Associations

SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ASSOCIATIONS

While the Air Force can not endorse or sanction professional military associations (PMAs) under the Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)(DoD 5500.7-R), commanders can provide other types of support. JER 3-209.

PMAs include such organizations as the Air Force Association, Air Force Sergeants Association, The Retired Officer Association, the Reserve Officer's Association, and other similar organizations that exist to promote the development of military professionals.

The following information highlights the support that can be provided to PMAs. This fact sheet is not a substitute for legal guidance. Decisions on requests from PMAs should be made on a case-by-case basis with the assistance of the staff judge advocate.

Distribution of PMA Information

- Commanders can publish news items on PMAs, including current activities and membership drives. Note, however, that similar groups merit similar treatment -- a commander cannot pick and choose which PMAs to publicize. JER 3-208.
- Commanders can issue informative memos on the existence of PMAs and can announce their membership/fundraising drives. Pursuant to DoD/GC guidance, when referring to membership/fundraising activities, commanders need to remain neutral and detached. Informative memos should avoid the use of certain words (including "endorse," "support," "encourage," "recommend," and "urge"). DoD/GC Memo, *Endorsement vs. Information Memoranda*, 28 May 96.
- Commanders can issue official letters thanking PMAs for support of the Air Force community. These letters can be disseminated through official channels. See SECDEF Memo, *DoD Support of the Armed Services YMCA*, 8 May 97.
- Commanders can permit PMAs to post notices of special events on bulletin boards and television or radio programs in the same way other organizational information is disseminated. However, unless the base has an E-mail bulletin board set up for non-official postings, commanders should avoid using official E-mail systems to disseminate information on PMA or other private organization activities. JER 2-301.a.(2)(e); AFI 33-119, *E-Mail Management and Use*, para. 3.3.2.5.

- Commanders can permit PMAs to set out membership applications, leaflets or flyers in a common area of the base, as long as similar groups are given the same privilege. JER 3-211.a.
- Commanders can encourage members to participate in PMAs, in general.
- When publicizing PMA membership drives, the commander can publicize the name of the AF member who has *volunteered* to be a point of contact for new members. The commander may not, however, appoint a member to do this, nor may the member act as a PMA representative in an official capacity. JER 3-210.

Support for PMA Activities

- Commanders can appoint an official liaison to act as a base representative to the local PMA chapter. The liaison performs official duties in representing AF interests to the PMA. The liaison cannot become involved in PMA management. JER 3-201.a.
- Commanders can support PMA breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners by publicizing these events and providing speakers or panel members. The JER also allows commanders to allow AF members and employees excused absences for "reasonable periods of time" to voluntarily attend these types of activities. JER 3-211; 3-300.b.
- Commanders may permit members and employees to use government equipment and administrative support to prepare papers to be presented at a PMA event (i.e., conferences, seminars, or similar events) if: (1) the paper is related to the employee's official duties, (2) the AF can derive some benefit from such participation, and (3) the support does not interfere with official duties. JER 3-300.b.
- Commanders can provide logistical support of PMA-sponsored events, such as conferences and seminars (except for fundraising and membership drives) if: (1) the support does not interfere with official duties; (2) legitimate AF interests are served; (3) it is appropriate to associate the AF with the event; (4) the event is of interest to the AF; (5) the AF is able and willing to provide the same support to similar events; (6) the support is not prohibited by other statutes; and (7) no admission fee (beyond covering reasonable costs) is charged. JER 3-211.a.
- Commanders can provide limited logistical support for PMA-sponsored charitable fundraisers when items (1) through (6), above, are met and the fundraiser will take place away from the Federal workplace. JER 3-211.b.
- Commanders can lead by example by joining one or several PMAs in their personal capacity. JER 3-300.